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## THE HEALTH BEHAVIOURS OF YOUNG POLES AT THE TURN OF XX AND XXI CENTURY

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### ABSTRACT

**Background.** The increase of health-related knowledge and its accessibility, with the development of technology and social pressure on health care result in health gaining importance as a value.

In the face of changes, one's consciousness of the link between health behaviours and medical fitness is bigger and bigger. The young people in Poland are up-bringing in the domination of socio-ecological health model which highlights the entity's lifestyle and its impact on health. Regular physical activity, appropriate, balanced nutrition, friendly interpersonal relationships, coping

with stress and avoidance of risky behavior are the most important factors of the healthy human lifestyle. They affect the physical, mental, social development, health, learning and working ability.

**Objectives.** The aim of this study was to analyse health behaviours among of Poles with reference to age, in recent years.

**Summary.** The work in detail discusses biomedical paradigm of the health. Lifestyle concept as an effective way to prevent the occurrence of diseases, their development and complications were also described.

Unfortunately, Poles are not aware of all the consequences of these threats. In connection with above, one should take care of systematic health education in the scope of effects reducing the negative impact on health threats.

**Key words:** health, health behavior, paradigm of the health, lifestyle

## INTRODUCTION

According to the subject literature which deals with the direct or indirect issues connected with human health, there are approximately 120 synonyms as well as definitions which characterize term 'health' and 'health behaviours' [1].

This differentiation of names is caused by the interpretation of the various types of scopes of knowledge and the roots of the human health potential on many levels (social, mental and biological one). The influence on the socio – political, economic and cultural systems is also non-negligible [2].

Initially, the term 'health' was marked quite pejorative. It was understood only as the lack of any illness or dysfunctions while operating the particular systems or organs. It was only related to the International Classification of Diseases simultaneously the subjective and individual discomfort' perception was not taken into consideration. This kind of focus only on the objective measures of the society' health condition was in some ways a type of an answer to the biomedical model which was evolved for the science. According to this model, human body was like a machine and any kind of disease was a verifiable and undeniable proof that some deviations existed [3].

Health was associated with the lack of disorders concerning the biological functioning of organism [4].

The health understanding only in the context of negations in the subjective perception of different types of disorders and disease conditions, was insufficient. It was mainly because it was in favor of increasing different difficulties connected with the accumulating of health' potential [5].

The focus of different social groups on a health' value does not describe only the modern world. Hippocrates – called the father of medicine – has already paid attention to the existing correlations between both the natural environment condition or lifestyle and psycho-physical condition [6].

To continue, basing on the biomedical model and therefore thinking about health in terms of objectivism, in the course of time, started to raise questions and hence it became a shell of the various considerations. Because of the fact that this model has a limited performance abilities, the alternative interpretations started to be sought. This narrow health perception which without no doubts was describing person only from the physical point of view simultaneously questioning body and mental cohesion, became the starting point for modern understanding of health. However, it started to change in the first part of XX<sup>th</sup> century [7].

The milestone to the modern health perception was International Conference on Health organized in summer 1946 in New York where the Constitution of World Health Organization has been ratified. It entered into force on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1948<sup>1</sup>. The key element of this paper was the first definition of health. It was related to “*state of complete physical, mental and social feelings and not only the lack of disease or disorder*” [8,9].

This unprecedented event was signed down in history as a try to holistic attempt to health – paying attention to multidimensionality and complexity of a human being and, moreover, its psycho-physical condition which is established on the social relations. The objective factors have never been before treated on a par with the subjective ones. Being seen in opposition to the biomedical model, *psyche* and *soma* started to cooperate as the spheres of human existence [10].

According to the definition given by WHO, health is not only seen from the positive point of view but it also concerns the psycho-social level. Though, the most important issue which

1 [www.who.un.org.pl/common/files\\_download.php?fid=15](http://www.who.un.org.pl/common/files_download.php?fid=15)

increases the quality of life is established not only in the somatic health nature but also in the interpersonal relationships, freedom feeling, independence and values which are coherent with the individual world outlook. Furthermore, in accordance with the actual WHO demand it is also crucial while defining health to take into consideration the spiritual dimension [11,12].

The next issue which had a great impact on a health vision was the International Health Promotion Conference which took place in Ottawa (Canada) in 1986. The main result of this experts group' deliberations was the publication of the "Ottawa Charter"[13]. This paper defined health as some kind of resource or wealth which everyone has and due to it, he or she determines both the individual and socio-economic development. This Charter qualified the key considerations connected with people's health condition, and what is more, it defined the new direction and the implementation while taking different actions to promote health. According to "Ottawa Charter", there are five conditions which influence one's health. First of all, it is to ensure everyone to feel safe and secure. Secondly, the access to education, clean water and food is necessary. Moreover, the dignified existence must be present as well as the guarantee of social justice and equality between people [14].

The next key formulation of WHO from 1977-79 is "Strategy for Health for All by the Year 2000". It allowed to shape the politic health [15,16,17].

In compliance with this strategy, health is a value which allows human to set targets, to pursue dreams and to achieve life satisfaction. Therefore, health is a way to gain life of the higher quality as well as a guarantee of the socio-economic development [18,19]

The aim of the study is to present a change in the approach to health of poles at the turn of the twentieth and the twenty-first century.

## **THE LIFESTYLE AND HEALTH BEHAVIORS OF POLES**

Undoubtedly, the lifestyle is the issue which unambiguously determines the human's health. The definition of lifestyle includes two main aspects. First of all, it is the functioning of individual as well as the functioning of a group to which the particular entities belong. The group's way of life is defined by the scope of layouts and behaviours as well as by the social interpretations evolved by the members of this group. The individual's lifestyle consists of the

behaviour paradigm which is a result both of its characteristics and the one's reality cognition. Over the years, the lifestyle is modified. These changes arise because of the age, sex, personality and social role [20]. Moreover, the lifestyle consists also of the healthful behaviours which have a positive or negative impact on human's organism. In fact, they are a reflection of personal attitude towards health. To continue, they are also the example of understanding responsibility for one's life. Among the negative health behaviours, it is possible to distinguish smoking or alcoholism as well as the lack of physical exercises. The contradistinction of such behaviours is taking care of one's health due to well-balanced diet or physical exercises [21].

Nowadays, the constant pursue to increase one's health resource is classified as health-promoting behaviours. Purposely, to gain this aim there are dedicated demographic, social and economic-ecological politics. The bottom line of health promotion is to trigger that people to aim at solidification and improvement of their health condition [20]. In addition, over the years, this kind of promotion has been transformed into the ideology named 'healthism' which means the specific sort of focus on the health aspect. Healthism is a term which became the foundation both to define and sense a welfare. Furthermore, man can gain this welfare only by changing the lifestyle. The main assumption of this ideology is a belief that health of particular person is determined by the undertaken actions. The phenomenon of healthism has been observed in 70s in America. The health awareness started to rise together with people's interest in health. It was reflected by the bigger engagement in different initiatives in favor of health promotion and examinations. In polish literature, it is possible to observe different translations of this term. However, both health treatment as a superior value and taking responsibilities for its condition seem to be the most appropriate translations [22].

## **HEALTH BEHAVIOURS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN POLAND**

Different health behaviours are dependent on the social as well as the cultural context. Parents' behaviours in the very early years of child's life are crucial because they cause that the particular habits occur and linger. This process is in progress as the consequence of the further socialization actions which occur at school and later in professional and social environments. These behaviours relate mainly to nutrition, physical activities and preventic health-favorable actions. Apparently, the health behaviours are majorly modified by media [23].

In 2015, the research involving the relations between the role of media and the both youth's and adults' health behaviours was conducted. It was discovered that more than a half of respondents (67,7%) agreed that media influence making decisions. The others (34,2%) defined this influence as a positive one. Interestingly, the commercial advertisements were also impactful for almost half of respondents (48%). Moreover, half of them admitted that they were searching for some information concerning health in the internet within last two weeks. The most popular information which was typed in includes: drugs as well as effects of its taking, terms associated with diet and illness' diagnostics. Health care prevention was the rarest issue which was taken into consideration. It can be observed that media have the crucial impact on making health-promoting decisions. Because of the fact that the role of media is continuously increasing, it can be assumed that this role will be more and more significant [24].

Alongside, media's positive impact on health behaviours, the negative ones are visible too. These behaviours are exhibited by the physical activity declining among young Poles. The test results have shown that from 1998 until 2010, the physical activity among boys declined by 20% and – regarding girls – by 15 %. However, at the same time, using the internet has become more popular (it increased five Times among girls and it is about two and half Times bigger among boys). There are three times more male-computer users than the female ones. Both, the drop in physical activity and increase in computer' using foster obesity. And consequently, the still increasing of appearing obesity. In 2002 until 2010 has arisen and is a result of this phenomenon among boys (by 10%) and girls (by 6%) [25].

The optimistic conclusion can be drawn while analyzing the research on addiction conducted in 2012 which was performed on students. The results show that nowadays more than 64% of students have never before smoke cigarettes. Approximately 13% of respondents were people who smoke consistently. Over half of students (63,7%) claimed that they occasionally drink alcohol and most of them (11,9%) do it once a month [21].

Although, students mostly do not exhibit highly destructive behaviours, simultaneously they do not behave in a health-promoting way. According to the findings, slightly over half of respondents (53,4%) admit that their eating habits are improper. They highlight some causes of this situation. The most common are the lack of time (63%) as well as the wrong time organization (45,9%). It is admitted by 25% of female students that they are on a diet, however there were

only 8,3% of male respondents claiming the same. Moreover, it turned out that respondents presents low and average health behaviours. Furthermore, the results of research show that the perception of self-image is depended on sex. Women much more often look after their silhouette and their health. Regarding men, they concentrate only on having fun during their free time [26].

Despite the bigger amount of negative health behaviours among polish teenagers, the fact that they have a firm belief in their responsibility for their psychophysical condition seems to be positive and optimistic. Additionally, research shows that they are conscious the fact that there is a relationship between lifestyle, health-promoting actions and one's wellbeing or physical condition. However, in terms of behaviourism, they do not respect health and rational lifestyle. According to healthism, they treat health in a holistic way, referring to both psychological and medical aspects. Next, they show a great criticism towards their own anti-health behaviours [27].

## **SUMMARY**

This article presents a change in the approach to health and lifestyles.

For many years, according to the biomedical model, the emphasis was placed on the disease and the factors that condition it. Gradually, the role of human activity in creating health, understood also in terms of individual development as well as the development of population, began to be recognized. This change was associated with the adoption of the biopsychosocial model of the human being.

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